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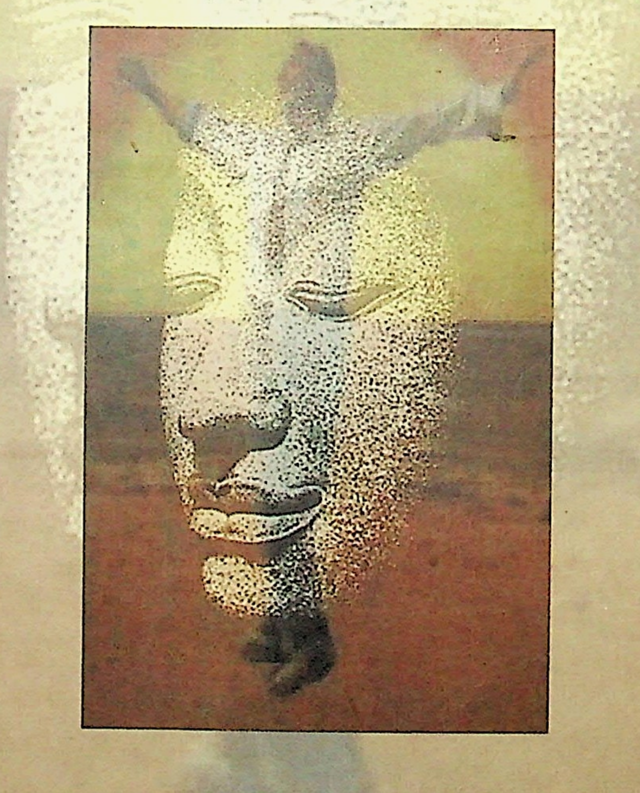
MEDITATIONS

for People in Charge



PAUL BRUNTON

MEDITATIONS FOR PEOPLE IN CHARGE

A Handbook for Men and Women whose Decisions Affect the World

MEDITATIONS
for People in Charge

PAUL BRUNTON

2620

New Age Books

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INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to inspire, counsel, and console people already in, or aspiring to, positions of responsibility. It is designed to help you keep yourself in touch with your own spiritual strength and personal integrity; to help you be well, do well, go on fighting that good fight day after often difficult day, and be happier at the end.

It's also designed to help you cultivate qualities, attitudes, and skills that will make others happy you're in charge. It's especially meant to help you know where to turn to sound out your own best intelligence amidst conflicting advice or data.

▪ ▪ ▪

What does it mean to be "in charge"? My thoughts first began to roam around that question back in 1981, after reading an article Lance Morrow wrote for *Time* magazine about the decline of the work ethic. He suggested that the key to having a positive work ethic is that the work being done is seen as "pleasing in the eyes of God." With as little of that as is being offered today, he asked, is it any wonder the work ethic is fading away?

Many years later, a good friend pointed out that this idea was so fundamental to the founders of the United States that it appears on the back of the $1 bill. Take a look at the image of the Great Seal, with an all-seeing eye atop a pyramid: It symbolizes the pyramid structure of society working with divine vision at its peak. The Latin *novus ordo seclorum* means "a new world order"; the *annuit coeptis* means "He is smiling on us." On a dollar bill, all this suggests that this idea was at the very basis of their notion of an effective modern economy.

Is it surprising that now we are moving towards an hourglass-shaped socio-economic structure—symbolizing how deeply we've gotten ourselves trapped in the constricting structures of time, how far we are from a vision that expresses timeless or eternal values in daily life? That it's more and more rare to find anyone actually "in charge" of anything? That nearly everyone rolls with the punches, trying to survive? That so much of life now seems to slip through our fingers like sand through the unseeing mindless hourglass?

I have come to feel that to draw upon what it takes to really be "in charge," you need something of what the earlier model offers. You need to find a way of being instrumental in actualizing at least some small part of such vision. You have to find for yourself, and articulate for others, a standard that evokes the heart's approval. You have to know and be able to communicate the purpose of honoring that standard. You have to be able to show how real people in a real world actually benefit—in terms of their ultimate happiness—from the efforts you are asking for in the department, division, class, family, or group otherwise charged to your care.

Is there anything about the job, the situation, the thing you are or aspire to be in charge of that, if done right, would bring forth a smile from whatever image you have of God in your heart? This book is meant to help you find that out and make it happen.

■ ■ ■

Paul Brunton (1898–1981) is admired throughout the world for his skill in adapting traditional wisdom to modern conditions. All the selections in this book are from his sixteen volume series *The Notebooks of Paul Brunton*. I would like to thank Tim Smith, coeditor of the *Notebooks* project, and Sam Cohen, director of the Ithaca Youth Bureau in Ithaca, New York, for their expert assistance in selecting highly relevant passages from that enormous opus for this timely book.

PAUL CASH, EDITOR
BURDETT, NEW YORK
MAY 1995

PAUL BRUNTON

1

BEING IN CHARGE

There is a perfect relation between the impression we make upon others and the mastery we have achieved over ourselves. The strength of the impression depends on the degree of the mastery. Furthermore, our power over the world outside us will be proportionate to our power over the nature within us.

With most people the reaction to their environment and to events is mainly impulsive and mostly uncontrolled. So the first step for them is to become conscious of what they are doing, the second being to refuse to do it when reflection and wisdom dictate a better course. All this implies a taking hold of the self and a disciplining of its mechanism—body, feelings, and thoughts. It leads to using the self with *awareness* and functioning in it with efficiency.

■ ■ ■

The more you can inwardly free yourself from the claims of your daily regime—that is, the more you can become emotionally detached from it and transfer your interest, love, and desire to the higher self—the greater will be your power to achieve dominance over undesirable conditions.

■ ■ ■

There is a godlike thing within us which theology calls the spirit and which, because it is also a portion of the higher power within the universe, I call the Overself. He is wise indeed who takes it as his truest guide and makes it his protective guardian.

■ ■ ■

Despite all the talk disparaging the ego, it is not wrong but praiseworthy to develop the best personality one can and then use it. Its character can be purified, its passions controlled, its weaknesses overcome, its ignorance dispelled. New virtues can be introduced and new power developed. One can then make better use of such a personality—for one's own advantage and for service of others—and one should.

■ ■ ■

It is impossible for the materialist to perceive that we live and move and have our being in a universal Mind. But the sage, knowing this, knows also that this universal life will take care of his individual life to the degree that he opens himself out to it, to the extent that he takes a large and generous view of his relation to all other individual lives.

■ ■ ■

Too many persons claim a freedom to choose and to will who in reality have only the very opposite—a captivity to their desires. These desires respond like a machine to the conditions which surround them and delude them into the belief that they are deliberately choosing from among those conditions. The moods and emotions of these persons are changed by every change of outer circumstance, provoked favourably or unfavourably by the nature of each change. Where is the freedom in this? Does it not rather show dependence?

■ ■ ■

Self-reliance is not a quality which can be given to others. Only by providing them with your own example can you contribute to this end.

* * *

In every situation where you are involved with other persons, consider neither your own welfare solely to the exclusion of others nor theirs to the detriment of your own. Do what is just and wise in the situation, taking the welfare of all into consideration and being guided ultimately by the impersonal intuition of the Overself.

* * *

Freedom is a tremendous word whose meaning goes much beyond the average person's idea of it. One is not free who is in bondage to narrow prejudice, strong attachment, unruled desire, and spiritual ignorance.

* * *

Before we can help others or influence the world, we need to possess three things: knowledge, experience, and power.

* * *

To get this strength and gain this wisdom, you must paradoxically follow two opposed courses. First, you must retire wholly from all activities every day and contemplate them analytically as well as impersonally. Second, you must plunge into and use those activities as springboards whence to rise to higher levels. Hence, it is said that neither meditation nor action is enough. Both are necessary to you and to one another. The first inspires and aspires, the second expresses and tests.

■ ■ ■

One who attains even a little power to help others cannot measure where that help will stop. If it gives a lift to one person whom you know, that person may in turn give a lift to another, and so on indefinitely in ever-widening ripples.

■ ■ ■

The ego will persistently lead you to indulge in wishful efforts to rationalize your past mistakes. You must choose between such pleasant deception and the unpleasant truth.

■ ■ ■

If you wish to be in harmony with the order of the universe, to work with it and not force yourself against it, you must stop imposing the ego—your ego—upon it.

■ ■ ■

Take care that opponents are not permitted to disturb the equanimity of your mind. Conscious of the loftiness of your motives where they suspect sordid ones, aware of the true facts of a situation which they construe falsely, you must discover your own strength by trusting the higher laws to take care of them, while you take care to protect your thoughts from being affected negatively.

■ ■ ■

Where, despite your best efforts, you find that you cannot control the course of events, you should accept it as being the higher will, the ordained destiny. Where you can control it, you should seek to learn from and obey the inner voice in what you do.

■ ■ ■

The foundation of this work is a fine character. He who is without such moral development will be without personal control of the powers of the mind when they appear as a result of this training; instead those powers will be under the control of his ego. Sooner or later he will injure himself or harm others. The philosophic discipline acts as a safeguard against these dangers.

■ ■ ■

There are times when you may boldly go forward and take your chance, when fortune's wheel may turn in your favor. But such times do not fill the whole of a lifetime and during the negative periods you should lie low and risk nothing.

■ ■ ■

There is an inescapable balance between our principal thoughts and deeds and our principal life experiences. And this balance shows itself where it is least expected—in the moral sphere. Our wrong-doing produces sorrows, not only for others but principally for ourselves. Our good action produces a rebound of good fortune. We may not escape from the operation of this subtle law of moral responsibility. Causation is the top of a wheel whose bottom is consequence. This is just as true collectively as individually. When, for instance, a nation comes to believe that the conception of right and wrong is a false one, it marks itself down for destruction. We have seen this in our time in the case of the German nation. The moral law is not a figment of man's imagination. It is a divinely established reality.

■ ■ ■

There is an abuse of authority when anyone takes advantage of it to bolster his own ego at the expense of those under him.

■ ■ ■

Those who regard altruism as the sacrifice of all egoistic interests are wrong. It means doing well by all, including ourselves. For we too are part of the all. We do not honour altruistic duty by dishonouring personal responsibility.

■ ■ ■

Let it not be forgotten that goodwill towards mankind does not exclude goodwill towards oneself. The way of martyrdom, of dying uselessly for others, is the way of emotional mysticism. The way of service, of living usefully for others, is the way of rational philosophy.

* * *

In trying to help others in these unsettled times—perhaps one's own children—one should try to think of them in their larger relation to God, rather than in their relation to familiar surroundings, filial attachments, or the unexpected, disturbing situations which have come up, over which one has limited or no control. Prayer and positive thinking will be as much of a help at these times as anything else one can say or do.

* * *

True altruism of a philosophic kind is not done by the self but through the self, not by the ego but by the Overself using the ego. Few make this grade. Most practise their altruism by blending it with selfish motive or, in other cases, by masking that motive entirely so as not to upset their own or other people's illusion.

* * *

If authority has judged wrongly, misused power, or served selfish interests, these things should be scrutinized, plainly seen for what they are, and correction or reform demanded. But these are insufficient causes to reject all authority altogether. For when it is the voice of the accumulated experience, mental and physical, of many centuries, it has something to offer that is worth at least unbiased examination. But when it is unscrupulous, barbarous, or tyrannical, then it justly earns the nemesis of rebellion.

▪ ▪ ▪

Both attitudes are required for a proper result: the idealistic which looks to a new and better future, the practical which recognizes the limitations of its heritage from past.

▪ ▪ ▪

We are not always given the chance to choose between simple good and evil. The situations which organized human society develops for us offer not infrequently the choice only between lesser and larger evils.

▪ ▪ ▪

What may be true on the ultimate level—the nonexistence of evil, the reality of the Good, the True, the Beautiful—becomes false on the level of duality. Here the twofold powers, the opposites, do exist, do hold the world in their sway. To deny relative evil here is to confuse different planes of being.

▪ ▪ ▪

The dark and destructive forces show themselves in Nature and life. To leave them out, unaccounted for and ignored, is to leave a weak place in oneself.

▪ ▪ ▪

Evil arises only when an entity goes astray into the delusions of separateness and materialism, and thence into conflict with other entities. There is no ultimate and eternal principle of evil, but there are forces of evil, unseen entities who have gone so far astray and are so powerful in themselves that they work against goodness, truth, and justice. But by their very nature such entities are doomed to eventual destruction, and even their work of opposition is utilized for good in the end and becomes the resistance against which evolution tests its own achievements, the grindstone against which it sharpens our intelligence, the mirror in which it shows us our flaws.

* * *

When ego confronts ego, and neither will yield, not to the other but to truth, then both will and must suffer.

* * *

So strong and deep is the hold which the ego has over you, that the flattery which condones that hold is accepted smilingly, whereas the criticism which weakens it is rejected irritably.

* * *

Keep an even balance and affirm what is positive in life even while you are criticizing and protesting against what is negative.

* * *

Whoever has dealings with others cannot afford to ignore the double nature of human nature. Failure to recognize it leads to confusing consequences. Looking neither for the good alone nor for the bad alone, but remaining emotionally detached during such an act of recognition, is a philosophical attribute. One who possesses it may hold no illusion about the mixed motives in others and yet still practise goodwill toward them. This must be so, for the primal source of all Goodness inspires that person daily and constantly to hold to this practice.

* * *

To offer someone constructive criticism and to avoid its being taken as a reproof, one should phrase the sentences carefully as if making a helpful suggestion and not as if making an attack.

* * *

If sometimes a criticism is called for if harsher experience is to be avoided, then let it be given by a constructive suggestion of the opposite positive quality only, not mentioning the actual negative one. But if that is unlikely to be accepted and a plain warning seems the only way, then it should be uttered humbly and tactfully.

* * *

Discipline of Speech. It requires great tact and great wisdom to talk frankly and give someone constructive criticism or make needed correction without hurting him or her. But even if both are absent, great love will achieve the same result.

■ ■ ■

We must see men and women not only as they are today, but also as they shall be in an evolutionary tomorrow. If we listen to the voice of experience, we tend to become cynics, if to the voice of the Overself, optimists. A shrewd appraisal of humanity should combine the two, recognizing and not denying ugly faults and dark frailties, but at the same time being graciously tolerant and forgiving.

■ ■ ■

To counsel those in trouble to adopt escapist forms of relief does not really help them, even though it may seem to do so. This is often an easier way out for the counselor than compelling them to face unpleasant truth about the inexorable necessity of working on themselves to remove the cause, when the trouble is only an effect, likely to be repeated in the future.

■ ■ ■

Unless you word your replies to criticisms carefully, cautiously, restrainedly, mildly, and with dignity, you will create violent and intolerant reactions, for few seek truth and most seek partisan opinions. You must demonstrate by the calm, dignified, temperate, and fair character of utterance, by its freedom from bitterness, that you have attained a higher level than those whom you criticize.

■ ■ ■

The first step in dealing with one who is difficult to live with, who is irritable, impulsive, quick to take offense, explosively bad-tempered, condemnatory, and sulky is to control in yourself what you wish him to control in himself—to set an example through self-discipline, to stimulate his higher will, and to give out love.

When correcting his mistakes or shortcomings, remember it is not so much *what* you say as *how* that matters. If done calmly, gently, kindly, and unemotionally, it will be effective. If not, it will arouse his ego into antagonism or resentment and fail of effect.

Every time he speaks to you, do not answer at once. Instead, pause, collect yourself to the dangers of the situation and answer slowly, taking special pains to be more polite than circumstances call for. If you do not do this, his fault may be aroused in him immediately and you may then pick it up sensitively, too; then both will display it.

Remember that negative fault-finding acts as an irritant to him and as a poison to your inner relationship. Correct him by positive, affirmative suggestions of what to do rather than harass him with criticisms of what not to do.

In short, be polite outwardly and surrender the ego inwardly. Only by first conquering the weakness inside yourself can you rightly hope that he will ever even begin to struggle against the same weakness inside himself. If he is the unfortunate victim of temperament, that is, of his ego, remember that he is a younger soul, that you are older, and check yourself. Iamblichus tells us that the Pythagoreans did not punish a servant nor admonish anyone during anger, but waited until they had recovered their serenity. They used a special word to signify such "self-controlled rebukes," effecting this calmness by silence and quiet.

Pythagoras himself advised that the scars and ulcers which advice sometimes causes should be minimized as much as possible: "The corrections and admonitions of the elder towards the younger should be made with much suavity of manners and great caution; also with much solicitude and tact, which makes the reproof all the more graceful and useful."

▪ ▪ ▪

Be grateful to the one who criticizes you, whether he be a friend or a foe. For if his criticism be true, he renders you real service. He may point out a flaw in your character that you have long neglected, with unfortunate results to yourself and others. His words may prompt you to remedy it.

▪ ▪ ▪

To give others who hold different beliefs a mental sympathy—enough to understand what it is they hold and why—calls for a capacity to detach oneself temporarily from one's own beliefs. This is not to be done, of course, by rejecting them in any way but by just letting them stand as they are while moving over and into the other person to get an understanding of his or her point of view. Such a capacity cannot be acquired without enough humility and selflessness to make it possible to entertain a distasteful viewpoint even for a single second.

▪ ▪ ▪

Mental sympathy with others must go only as far as a certain point: if it begins to affect us negatively, we must refrain from proceeding farther.

▪ ▪ ▪

Gandhi (and spiritual pacifists like him) believed that love shown to a man like Hitler would call forth its like from him. This is a typical belief among mystics down through the centuries. When tested by experience, we find that it is successful in some cases but a failure in many more. And where it fails it harms the criminal because he believes the more strongly that his crimes can go unpunished, and it harms society because it is a misapplication of a good ideal. Everything, even love, must be applied at the right time and at the right place, for when misapplied even a virtue becomes a vice. We must not forget that wise old Latin proverb which warns us that when the best is corrupted it becomes the worst of all.

■ ■ ■

Calmly recognize that suffering has its allotted function to perform in the divine plan, that other people have their lessons to learn through it when they will learn in no other way, and that the spectacle of its operation should, in such cases, be met with intelligent understanding rather than with neurotic sentimentality. Face the fact that many people will not learn from reason, intuition, or teaching and that no one can really liberate them from their sufferings except themselves. Every other kind of liberation is a false one. Others may effect it today only to see the same condition return tomorrow. You should not, in certain situations calling for hard decision, for instance, show unjustifiable weakness under the belief that you are showing forbearance, nor submit to antisocial egotism under the thought that you are practising love, nor abandon your highest duties for the sake of making a false and superficial peace with interfering ignorance, nor passively accept a flagrant wrong because God's will must always be borne.

■ ■ ■

In a negative situation, where negative criticisms and negative emotions are rampant, other persons may try to involve you in it, or at least get you to support their attitude and endorse their criticism.

But a feeling may come over you preventing you from doing so. If so, obey and remain silent. With time the rightness of this course will be confirmed.

* * *

The desire to achieve unity in various sections of human life, belief, and activity—and in humanity itself—is only a dream. The differences are there, and will, in some altered form, still be there even under the surface of any cheerful pseudo-Utopia of a unified world, or section of the world. There is no profit in denying them, only self-deception. The only real unity can come out of inner expansion, out of a great heart which excludes nothing and no one; but this will still not be uniformity.

* * *

Not to tell another person "No!" when all prudence, intelligence, foresight, and experience bid us do so is simply moral and verbal cowardice.

* * *

If you must assess people's motives and examine their characters, do so only to understand them, not to judge them. Do not use it to gossip about their personal frailties.

* * *

No single factor is usually responsible for a particular evil and no single remedy can cure it. Reformers are usually one-eyed and take our attention away from important contributory causes in order that we may fasten it upon the one which they happen to have picked out. They are doubtlessly well-meaning, but are apt to be dangerously fanatical.

■ ■ ■

Both conservative followers of tradition and progressive rebels against it may have something to offer which is worth welcoming. Why not admit the truth and scrutinize each offering justly? Why immediately react against or in favour of it, only by looking at the name of its source? It is better for everyone if there is willingness to accommodate the other, to get the entire picture and then only make decisions.

■ ■ ■

These rare natures who dispense goodwill and radiate tolerance, who rise calmly and without apparent effort above anger-provoking situations and highly irritating persons, represent an ideal. It is not an impossible one and may be realized little by little if you faithfully practise constructive meditation upon the benefits of calmness as well as upon the disadvantages of anger.

■ ■ ■

The ability to throw negative thoughts out of your mind is so valuable that a deliberate and daily effort to cultivate it is well worthwhile. This is as true of one's self-originated thoughts as of those picked up from outside, whether unwittingly from other persons, or absorbed through susceptibility from environments.

■ ■ ■

The same strength which is put into negative thoughts like fear, grief, revenge, and discord—to your own detriment—can be put into positive ones like courage, cheerfulness, fortitude, benevolence, and calmness, to your own benefit.

■ ■ ■

The lower nature does not let you keep this mood of high resolve long. Not many days pass before it seeks to discourage you. For the old cravings, the desire habits, and the emotional tendencies are still there. Soon they begin to trouble you again. "Why try?" your lower nature despondently tells you, "Why torment yourself uselessly? You can only fail in the end." Thus it creates the expectancy of failure and turns your high adventure into a dismal ordeal. Only a fixed vigilant determination and correct approach will bring forth that inner consent to the new disciplinary habits so necessary to success. Only by re-educating your tendencies and gradually making them quite willing to conform to the right way of living can the lower nature be beaten.

■ ■ ■

As soon as we succumb to moods of despondency, hopelessness, and helplessness, we are doomed. As soon as we triumph over them, we are saved.

■ ■ ■

Pessimism is practical defeatism and psychological suicide. It is the child of despair and the parent of dissolution.

■ ■ ■

We must put out of our minds every weakening impulse by instant reference to the strength of the Overself, every evil thought by a call to the infinite good of the Overself. In this way character is uplifted and made noble.

■ ■ ■

If you will take care to fill your mind with thoughts that are always elevating, always positive, and always constructive; if you will be vigilant to keep out all thoughts that are degrading and destructive, this simple technique will keep your mind so continuously filled with the right kind of thought and feeling that you will unconsciously and little by little completely overcome the wrong kind. Thus your character will change and approach your ideals.

■ ■ ■

Evil is strong in the world and sometimes people who aspire to the good become discouraged and depressed. It is at such moments that they need to recall whatever glimpses of the Real they have had and to remember that all things pass away, including the evil.

■ ■ ■

Why add to any dark or difficult situation? Is it not enough to have to endure it that you must enlarge it by setting up the tension of your negative emotions or disturbed thoughts about it? Keep them out of it.

■ ■ ■

Unless some quirk of destiny puts you in a public situation where duty and responsibility compel attention to negatives and criticisms, you may prefer to draw attention to the good and the beautiful, to spread harmony.

■ ■ ■

A useful meditation exercise is to create in advance through imagination, any meeting with others likely to happen in the near future or with those you live with, work with, or are associated with, which may result in provocation, irritability, or anger. See the incident in your mind's eye before it actually happens on the physical plane, and constructively picture yourself going through it calmly, serenely, and self-controlled—just as you would like yourself to be, or ought to be, at the time.

■ ■ ■

To the degree you keep ego out of your reaction to an enemy, to that degree you will be protected from him. His or her antagonism must be met not only with calmness, indifference, but also with a positive forgiveness and active love. These alone are fitting to a high present stage of understanding. Be sure that if you do so, good will ultimately emerge from it. Even if this good were only the unfoldment of latent power to master negative emotion which you show by such an attitude, it would be enough reward. But it will be more.

■ ■ ■

On the degree of authority which you vest in the Overself, will depend the degree of power you draw from it to conquer the lower nature.

■ ■ ■

It is easier to solve problems and overcome difficulties if they are met positively and courageously, and that means, or leads to, meeting them cheerfully and hopefully.

■ ■ ■

Those who can concentrate their thoughts *only* on the difficulties of the problems which confront them, the dangers of the solutions which are offered to them, or the sacrifices which are demanded of them, will never solve their problems.

■ ■ ■

The practice of refusing to accept appearances of evil or illusion and penetrating to realities of beneficence and truth draws out and discovers the purifying and healing capabilities which can remedy those appearances.

■ ■ ■

We are influencing the coming years by our thoughts. The importance of thought in forming external environment, the value of imagination in ultimately creating circumstances, and the use of visualizing the sort of life we aspire to have, are to be impressed and re-impressed on a generation which has to escape from the materialistic outlook. By this twofold process of rising to our divine source and controlling our intellectual ideas, we can begin to control our outward life in an extraordinary manner.

■ ■ ■

You will discover how much your environment, even your work, is a projection of your personality and of the thoughts that go to make it.

■ ■ ■

That which we experience inwardly as thought must, if it be strong and sustained enough, manifest itself outwardly in events or environment or both.

■ ■ ■

Our existence as human beings is conditioned, and at times even dominated, by circumstances. Often we should like to remold these, but to do so requires control, and control indicates the need for power, and power depends upon knowledge. This is the justification of philosophy. When we understand its doctrines aright, that mind constructs its experience, its environment, its world, we understand the implication that an amendment in our environment can come only through amendment in our thinking. Thought is creative, and we are continually building both ourselves and our environment by the characteristics and qualities of our thoughts.

■ ■ ■

Inner and outer difficulties are often related. What appears to be an ugly state of affairs may well be a definite attack of certain evil forces using interested human instruments. In such a situation, the individual should never practise nonresistance in any way, but, on the contrary, should fight them off as hard as he or she can. At the same time, you must remember that weakness in self-control can give these evil forces an opening which they might not have had otherwise. You must be on your guard if you wish to emerge victorious in the struggle. If you do not throw off this condition, you, yourself, unwittingly erect a barrier through which the divine help sent you finds it difficult to penetrate. Although the temptation to seek release at such a time through, for example, the easy way of drink is understandable, you must nevertheless remember the duty you owe to your spiritual life, to your personal interest on the relative plane, and to others.

■ ■ ■

One whose name has become celebrated in certain circles, however limited, so that he or she is to that extent a public figure, must beware of the perils that beset this exposed position. Be especially careful of those who try to draw you into confidential conversation in order to betray your confidence at a later date.

■ ■ ■

Although you should give your best to external life, you should not give the whole of yourself to it. Somewhere within your heart you must keep a certain reserve, a spiritual independence. It is here, in this secret place, that the supreme value of the Overself is to be cherished, loved, and surrendered to.

■ ■ ■

When we learn to accept the terms of our own limitation, and go along with them, we not only gain greater peace but also get more effective action. For to live in impossible unrealizable dreams is to end in futility.

■ ■ ■

Independent judgement is an asset if it is sufficiently well-informed—if not, then it may be a liability.

■ ■ ■

Human frailty being what it is, human conduct should never surprise us and never amaze us. By not expecting too much from it, we save ourselves unnecessary bitterness or disappointment.

* * *

Tolerance is needed if we are to live with even a minimum of harmony in society. To the philosopher it comes easily as a natural result of his or her development. But it need not be practised at the expense of the equally necessary attributes of prudence and caution. There is a point where it must stop, a point where it leads to greater evil than good.

* * *

This is what you have to learn—and it can be learned only by personal practice, not from any book—how to keep in beautiful equipoise receptivity to your sacred Centre and efficiency in attending to the world's demands. This is answering Jesus' call to be in the world but not of it. This is the union of busy actuality with central tranquillity.

* * *

From this deep calm, certain valuable qualities are born: courage when tragedy confronts you, strength when battles must be fought, and wise perception when problems arise.

* * *

As your centre moves to a profounder depth of being, peace of mind becomes increasingly a constant companion. This in turn influences the way in which you handle your share of the world's activities. Impatience and stupidity recede, wrath at malignity is disciplined; discouragement under adversity is controlled and stress under pressures relaxed.

■ ■ ■

You are to cultivate a smooth calmness under all conditions until your emotions are never taken by surprise. You are to keep self-possessed at all times so that no contingency finds you inwardly unprepared for it.

■ ■ ■

Just as a flat-surfaced mirror will correctly give back an image of whatever is presented before it, so a properly quieted mind will register objects, creatures, and persons such as they are and will not disturb them by distortions, prejudices, or expectations. One whose inner being is purified, controlled, and concentrated is able to live in the world and yet not be of the world, is able to go through worldly experiences and happenings and yet not be pulled out of his or her tranquil centre by them.

■ ■ ■

You will learn by practice to discipline your own emotional reactions to every situation, however provoking or irritating it may be. The cultivation of inner calm, the growth of mental equanimity, will be set up as a necessary goal.

■ ■ ■

Even when a situation becomes quite critical, a here-and-now matter, you should not give way to panic. The first move after the first shock should be to restore and maintain calm, the second to consider what you are to do—a question for which you should look not only to thinking for an answer but also to intuition.

■ ■ ■

Present troubles are mentally put at a distance so that inner calm may be restored: then they can be more properly attended to.

■ ■ ■

The stillness has magic powers. It soothes, restores, heals, instructs, guides, and replaces chaos and tumult by orderliness and harmony.

■ ■ ■

One secret of preserving the stillness after returning to outward activity is not to let oneself be hurried, not even to seem hurried. Cultivate a leisurely approach.

■ ■ ■

That some unexpected and unpleasant event may surprise you to the extent that your composure breaks down, is another possibility to which the same rule applies—rise after *every* fall.

■ ■ ■

The first way of finding peace when harassed by a hard problem or situation is to turn away from the tumult of thoughts and look for the still centre within. When it is found and just when it leaves, or must be left, ask it for the guidance needed. Let it correct those thoughts.

■ ■ ■

How can you obtain dominion over an unfavourable environment from which you are unable to escape? There is but one way and that lies entirely within yourself. You must turn away in thought from its contemplation and fix your mind upon the radiant Power within. Thus you will be uplifted.

■ ■ ■

There are situations which may seem beyond endurance and circumstances beyond sufferance. It is then that those who have learned how to withdraw into their interior being, how to return to their source, may find some measure of help and strength.

■ ■ ■

The stillness is not experienced in the same way as a mere lazy and idle reverie: it is dynamic, creative, and healing. The presence of one person who is able to attain it is a gift, a blessing, to all others, though they know it not.

■ ■ ■

To turn one's mind instantly towards the divinity within, when in the presence of discordant people, is to silence harsh thoughts and to banish hurtful feelings. This frequent turning inward is necessary not only for spiritual growth, but for self-protection. Everything and everyone around us plays a potent influence upon our minds, and this is the best means of detaching oneself from this ceaseless flow of suggestions.

▪ ▪ ▪

It is this inner work in the Silence which reaches the deepest level and in the end achieves the greatest effects. The world does not understand this, and hence its noisy and superficial activities which have produced the chaos and disorder of our times.

2

SEEKING GUIDANCE AND STRENGTH

If a situation is fraught with anxiety and is also either unavoidable or unalterable, the first procedure is to organize all your forces to meet it calmly. The second is to call on the higher power for help by turning to it in relaxation and meditation.

Right judgement is more easily made in a calm atmosphere. It is confused, upset, or even blocked by passion or tension or strong negative moods such as depression.

■ ■ ■

You are more likely to get light on your problem if you avoid getting tense or feeling frustrated about it.

■ ■ ■

However harassing a problem may seem to us, if we can give up our egoistic attitude towards it, if we can keep the lower emotions away from it, the best possible solution under the circumstances will develop of its own accord. There is veritable magic in such a change of thinking and feeling. It opens the gate to higher forces and enables them to come to our help.

■ ■ ■

Whatever the difficulty, you will certainly face it better and may solve it sooner if the ordinary approach through reason and practicality is controlled and illumined by the final approach through the higher self. This is done by dwelling on its never-leaving presence and healing power.

■ ■ ■

It is good to withdraw for a while to bathe in the pool of profounder thought—not to escape life but to gain stronger faith for living, clearer vision for action, and a true impetus in all things.

■ ■ ■

The man or woman who makes no time for thought about God or contemplation on God is to be pitied. For on the scale of real values that person's actual business is mere idleness if it remains unguided, unprotected, and uninspired by the truths, laws, or intuitions drawn from such retreats.

■ ■ ■

If it is objected that this attention to self-discovery does not help the world or solve its problems, the answer is, first, that it is part of the way to help the world, second, it puts one nearer the source of inspiration, of creativity, so that one sees better how to solve those problems, and third, the isolation is temporary anyway and with each return to society one is a better person.

■ ■ ■

If, while managing a situation, you are filled with anxiety or taut with tension, take it as a warning sign that you are managing with the unaided ego alone. That is, you have forgotten, or failed, to turn it over to the higher power, to put it in the hands of the Overself.

■ ■ ■

No other act is so urgent or so important as this, to turn now in thought and remembrance, in love and aspiration, toward the Overself. For if you do not but turn toward that other and worldly act which is so clamant and demanding, you fall into a tension which may lead to error and consequent suffering. But if you do turn toward the Overself first and then act, you rise up to inner calm and consequent wiser judgement.

■ ■ ■

The need to make a rapid decision may create panic in an uncertain mind. Here again the best counsel is to go into the calm Silence, push aside the insistent thoughts of pressure, and wait in patience for mental quiet to manifest itself. Then only can intuitive guidance emerge.

■ ■ ■

Can you put your personal problems, interests, or difficulties into the hands of the higher Power? This is both the first and the last procedure, but in between you may be led to call for the services of reason, observation, experience, authority, and specialized knowledge.

■ ■ ■

The need to guide your personal life more intuitively comes home to you after every major mistake has been committed and its effects felt. You see then that it is not enough to calculate by intellect, nor feel by impulse, nor act on emotion, for these have led you to sufferings that could have been prevented, or caused other people sufferings that bring you regrets. You learn that it is necessary to listen inwardly, to wait in mental quiet for intuitive feeling to arise and guide you.

* * *

Make it an unfailing practice to turn inwards in moments of need for help and in moments of perplexity for direction.

* * *

Once you are clearly aware of the presence of the Overself, you will find that it will spontaneously provide you with a rule of conduct and a standard of ethics at all times and under all circumstances. Consequently you will never be at a loss to know what to do in difficult moral situations, nor how to behave in challenging ones. And with this knowledge will also come the power to implement it.

* * *

In finding the godlike within yourself, you find also the Good. And from that stems forth goodwill toward all. It is really love active on a higher plane, love purified of self and cleansed of grossness.

* * *

The Overself is neither a cold metaphysical concept nor a passing wave of emotion. It is a *Presence*—sublime, sacred, and beneficent—which grips your heart, thought, and body by its own mysterious power, making you regard life from a nobler standpoint.

* * *

Only when we act in and from the Overself can we really be said to act aright, for only then shall our deeds be wise and virtuous, most beneficial in the ultimate sense both to our own self and to others.

■ ■ ■

Out of this deep mysterious centre within yourself, you will draw the strength to endure distresses with fortitude, the wisdom to manage situations without after-regrets, the insight to keep the great and little values of everyday living in proper perspective.

■ ■ ■

It is from this source that you will draw both strength to rise above your own temptations and love to rise above other people's hatred.

■ ■ ■

Always turn for your first defense against the perils and troubles of this world to brief meditation upon the all-wise, all-powerful Overself, and only after that for your secondary defenses to the ego's human resources.

■ ■ ■

The Overself's power to alter circumstances, create opportunities, and uphold persons is available to anyone who fulfils the requisite conditions. These include some amount of mental preparation and moral purification, some clear perception of the fact that the Overself is present here and now, an instant and constant remembrance of this fact, and finally a willingness to trust completely to its providential help, supply, and support no matter how undesirable or intolerable a situation seems to be.

■ ■ ■

Lots of words are not needed to communicate what the Overself has to say. From its presence the truth, the power, and the virtue can make themselves felt.

■ ■ ■

Whoever finds his or her Overself and draws from it the will and desire to serve others, will radiate joy, confidence, and peace to them.

■ ■ ■

Give the ego back to the Overself and then the Overself will use it as it should be used—in harmony with the cosmic laws of being. This means that the welfare of all others in contact with the ego will be considered as well as the ego's own.

■ ■ ■

When the divinity in your own self is found at last, you will afterwards find its light reflected upon every other man and woman you encounter.

■ ■ ■

You have access to infinite wisdom and infinite support in every situation and under every given circumstance. But you have it only so far as you submit the ego to the higher self.

* * *

There is an inner light in all people which could, with time, convert their perplexed questionings into solid certitudes. There is this remarkable fact that hard problems which the unaided intellect cannot solve, gnawing anxieties upon which our past experiences throw no helpful light, may become illumined and solved with ease if we adopt this practical method of applying intuition to them. Among all the varied powers of the mind, a properly unfolded intuition is indeed one of the most priceless anyone could have. It always warns against wrong courses and often counsels the right ones. "I sometimes have a feeling, in fact I have it very strongly, a feeling of interference . . . that some guiding hand has interfered," confessed Winston Churchill in a speech during October, 1942. On the other hand, intuition may help us and allay our fears where reason alone merely increases them.

* * *

The intuition should give orders which the intellect should carry out. The reasoning and practicality needed to do so and to attend to their details will then be provided by the intellect itself. But the original function of giving direction and the authority of giving command will be vested in the intuition alone.

* * *

The subtlety and depth of your intuitions will increase with quickness, readiness, and obedience of your response to them.

* * *

So long as you fail to see that the answer to your problems is within yourself, but prefer the glib and easy explanation that it is in your environment, so long will the problem remain unsolved.

* * *

In the search for guidance when we have to make a momentous decision, or take an important step, it is well to go into the "Silence" with our problem. We may not get the answer quickly or even directly but if we are well-experienced in this kind of seeking, a light may eventually emerge from the dark and shine down on the problem.

* * *

All questions can find some kind of an answer in this mental silence; no question can be brought there often enough without a response coming forth in time. It is needful to be patient and to have faith during the waiting period. The inner monitor is certainly there but we have to reach it.

* * *

When a decision has to be made, and different sides of one's nature are pulling in different directions, creating inner conflict, bewilderment, and rendering a firm decision impossible, what is the aspirant to do? Find the true guidance? First surrender the problems to the Higher Power. This surrender is best formulated through the medium of a heartfelt prayer in which there is earnest desire first to learn and then to accept the guidance. This must be done with the utmost concentration and sincerity, seeking to learn the Higher Will and being ready to abide by it even if it disagrees with personal desires.

After this is done, wait calmly for days or even weeks with faith that the solution to the problem will eventually come. If it does not come directly from within as an intuitive certitude, then it may come through some event or contact or as a distant trend forming itself in outward circumstances and pointing to a specific direction.

■ ■ ■

However difficult the circumstances of your surface life may become, cling to the faith that the Overself really *is,* and that if you seek Its guidance It will lead you to the wisest solution of the problem. This does not necessarily or always mean that you should stop your own personal efforts. On the contrary, you should use your reason and judgement to the best degree of which you are capable, and also consult others who are more experienced or more expert than you are. But after you have done all that you can do, you should hand over your problem to the Overself. You must prove that you have really surrendered it by releasing yourself from further anxiety concerning the outcome. You must be confident that the higher power, which is always with you, can meet your needs. You must be patient enough to wait and courageous enough to accept a solution which offends your egoism. Then, outer help or inner guidance or an answer to your problem will be forthcoming.

* * *

As soon as you turn it over to the Higher Power to deal with, what are you doing? First, you are withdrawing the ego from trying to manage the matter. Second, you are placing the other person in the Overself's care or inserting the situation in the universal harmony. In the first case, management will no longer be limited by the short sight of your desires and the shallow penetration of your intellect. In the second case, the person will be exposed to the recuperative, renewing, and pacifying powers of the Overself or the situation will be benefited, through the mentalistic nature of the universe, in the best possible way for the ultimate good of all concerned in it.

This procedure is not the treatment suggested by rainbow-dreaming teachers, for it begins by noting the actual condition, however unpleasant or unhealthy that may be. It analyses by all the means within its reach the nature, the causes, and the effects of the condition: only then, only after this is done, does it turn away from miserable actuality and try to see the glorious ultimate ideality. From the moment that you consciously give recognition to the Overself and its perfection, you open the door to its forces.

■ ■ ■

It is not easy to know always what to do in certain situations, and this creates anxious states of mind and may lead to vacillating decisions. In that case it is better to make the experiment of waiting a little and praying to the Higher Self for guidance before falling asleep. Then, immediately after awakening, or rather in that brief state between sleep and waking, one should remain passive to whatever thought, message, or picture presents itself. This may require repetition day after day until the result is successful.

■ ■ ■

Ask yourself before sleeping the questions that puzzle you and the answers may be there, waiting for you, on waking.

■ ■ ■

Work quietly for a few minutes daily in handing your problem over to the Higher Power, confessing you have done what you could, and praying from the depths of your heart for the right solution. However, on no account dictate what that solution should be. Examine the lesson behind your sufferings in dealing with problems of the past, acknowledge the mistakes and repent them. Then wait and watch what happens during the coming weeks or months. The advantage of this method is that it "works"; the disadvantage is that it gives us what is best for our next spiritual step forward, which is not always to personal liking but is always for our best in the long run. The important thing is to adopt and maintain an attitude of surrender—not to another person but to the Overself—in the face of adverse emotions.

■ ■ ■

Being guided intuitively does not mean that every problem will be solved instantly as soon as it appears. Some solutions will not come into consciousness until almost the very last minute before they are actually needed. Learn to be patient, to let the higher power take its own course.

■ ■ ■

It is a mistake to assume that the sought-for guidance must necessarily reveal itself in all its entirety and all at once. It may, but quite often it does not show more than the next step to be taken or the next truth to be assimilated. The later ones are then withheld until this is done. Why should they be given in advance before we have demonstrated our faith in the first lead already given and our willingness to put it into practice?

■ ■ ■

There is no single pattern that an intuitively guided life must follow. Sometimes you will see in a flash of insight both course and destination, but at other times you will see only the next step ahead and will have to keep an open mind both as to the second step and as to the final destination.

* * *

Often intuition does not advise you until the time for an action or a decision or a move is nearly at hand. So you must wait patiently until it does and not let intellect or imagination construct fanciful plans which may be canceled by intuition's arisal.

* * *

Understand that destiny often moves forward like a game of chess. If you cannot see immediately your way to success in a career or the solution of a problem, you should look for the first step in that direction. For only after that has been taken will the second show itself, and later the third, and so on. Learn to detect the *beginnings* of the way to opportunity, even though opportunity itself is still not visible.

* * *

You must wait indefinitely until intuition supplies the needed answer or, if the matter is more urgent, wait only for a definite period and then review the situation again, ask humbly for guidance, and force a decision even though it is at risk

* * *

Do not rigidly hold to any course of worldly action which you have charted, but hold yourself open to a change indicated by higher leading at any time. Know that such an indication may come from within intuitively or from without circumstantially.

■ ■ ■

After you have meditated sufficiently on your problem, drop it from mental view altogether and wait, passively and patiently, surrendering it to the intuitive element within yourself. If you can get deep enough, absorbed enough, you will touch this element and may instantly receive a solution from it. If you cannot, it will be necessary to try again another time, and perhaps even several times. Then, either in that passive contemplation or unexpectedly during the day, or abruptly on awaking from sleep, the elusive answer to your question may be presented to you as a clear self-evident fact.

■ ■ ■

You should not form a preconception of what the answer ought to be, for thereby you impose the ego's dubious solution in advance upon the higher mind's. Instead you should be entirely unbiased and try to receive the answer, as well as respond to it, in a perfectly free way.

■ ■ ■

The essence of the matter is that you should be constantly attentive to the intuitive feeling in the heart and not let yourself be diverted from it by selfishness, emotion, cunning, or passion.

▪ ▪ ▪

Seek the centre of inner gravity and try to stay in it. Try to avoid being pulled out by emotions and passions, whether your own or other people's, by anxieties and troubles—in short, by the ego.

▪ ▪ ▪

On all occasions when the intuition's prompting is absent and the intellect's judgement is doubtful, prudence suggests a pause.

▪ ▪ ▪

Without this constant listening for intuitive guidance, and submission to it, we waste much time putting right the mistakes made or curing the sickness which could have been prevented or bemoaning the calamity which willpower could have averted. None of these are God's will, but our own causation.

▪ ▪ ▪

You will find, if you accept this intuitive leading, that although the unfavourable circumstances may remain the same, unchanged, your attitude towards them does not. Out of this inner change there will be given you the strength to deal with them, the calm to deal with them unmoved, and the wisdom to deal with them properly.

▪ ▪ ▪

It is better to wait, if intuition is not at once apparent, till all favourable facts are found and till full knowledge is gained of the unfavourable ones before deciding an issue.

■ ■ ■

Act neither too soon nor too late. Await the proper occasion with patience. Its coming will announce itself if you are sensitive to intuitional prompting. But if calculating doubt or emotional desire or other people's suggestions get in the way, you may misread the fitting time and spoil the opportunity.

■ ■ ■

Whatever is proper to a particular situation should be done; rules should not be followed blindly.

■ ■ ■

Although proper judgement may call for a particular decision, inexorable necessity may call for quite a different one.

■ ■ ■

How can you tell if inner guidance is truly intuitive or merely pseudo-intuitive? One of the ways is to consider whether it tends to the benefit of all concerned in a situation, the others as well as oneself. The word "benefit" here must be understood in a large way, must include the spiritual result along with the material one. If the guidance does not yield this result, it may be ego-prompted and will then hold the possibility of error.

* * *

The intuition may be slow in revealing itself but when it does the inner certitude it provides, the strong consciousness of being right, will enable you to act decisively and swiftly.

* * *

Intuition carries its own assurance with it. Those skilled, proficient, and accustomed to it, who are able to recognize the authentic signs, can safely accept and trust themselves to it. But the beginner and the inexperienced need to check and test it, lest they are led astray by some impostor posing as the real thing or by some impulse sincerely presuming itself to be the real thing.

* * *

Intuition will not mislead you but your conscious mentality, which is its receiving agent, may do so. For your consciousness may partially deviate from its message, or even wholly pervert it, in giving deliverance to exaggerations or extravagances, impossibilities or delusions, thus filling you with useless hopes or groundless fears. Consequently, at the very time when you suppose that you are being infallibly guided by intuition you may in fact be strongly guided by pseudo-intuition—which is something quite different. You may believe that you are honouring higher guidance when in actuality you are dishonouring it. The situation is therefore much less simple and much more complex than most people know. To get intuitive direction when, for example, two or more conflicting courses of action confront you is not so easy as it seems and less easy still during a time of trouble. For during such a time you will naturally catch at anything already unknowingly or knowingly pre-determined by some complex to be the best way out of it. The very desire for a particular thing, event, or action may put a pseudo-intuition into your mind. If you want to be wary of this you should seek corroboration from other sources and especially from right reason. Again, the first thought which enters your consciousness after you have decided to seek such direction and have committed your affair to the deeper mind, is not necessarily an authentic intuition. Nor is the second thought such a one, nor the third, and so on. If the impression is to be rightly received, it must be patiently received. and that quite often means that you must sleep on it, and sleep on it perhaps for several days, sometimes weeks. The trustworthy intuition is really there during all this time but the obstacles to knowing it are also there in yourself. Do not, therefore, lose the inner direction through haste nor set up a stone image to be worshipped by mistake in its place. Nor is it enough to say that intuitive truths are self-evident ones. What appeared to be self-evident to you twenty years ago may now appear self-delusive to you. Edit your intuitions with your reason.

* * *

The corrective separation of true from false intuitions, and of impersonal from personal impressions, follows a careful disciplining of the consciousness and a cautious vigilance over the feelings.

* * *

You must watch vigilantly for the impulses of self-interest which interfere with the truth of intuitions or reflections.

* * *

The passing of time will either disprove your judgements or prove them correct. Note carefully this eventual result and compare it with the feelings which possessed you at the time of making your original decisions. In this way you can learn to see for yourself the difference between the marks of a true intuition and those of a false one.

* * *

When one has reviewed a problem from all its angles, and has done this not only with the keenest powers of the mind but also with the finest qualities of the heart, it should be turned over at the end to the Overself and dismissed. The technique of doing so is simple. It consists of being still. In the moment of letting the problem fall away, one triumphs over the ego. This is a form of meditation. In the earlier stage it is an acknowledgment of helplessness and weakness in handling the problem, of personal limitations, followed by a surrender of it (and of oneself) to the Overself in the last resort. One can do no more. Further thought would be futile. At this point Grace may enter and do what the ego cannot do. It may present guidance either then, or at some later date, in the form of a self-evident idea.

■ ■ ■

To shirk all responsibility and get someone else to make your decision in a perplexing situation contributes little or nothing to your own growth, but to seek help from more experienced persons in making your decisions is quite proper.

■ ■ ■

Constant Remembrance Exercises: The Overself is a term of which past experience may furnish no meaning. But perhaps you have had strangely beautiful moments when everything seemed to be still, when an ethereal world of being seemed very near to you. Well, in those moments you were lifted up to the Overself. The task you should set yourself is to recapture that blessed presence and feel once again that beautiful interlude of unearthly stillness. If, however, you cannot recall such moments or if, recalling them, you cannot regain afresh their vividness and reality, then there is an alternative path. Make it your business to recall the picture and presence of some man or woman whom you believe is awake to their Overself-consciousness. Take that person as your guru and therefore as an outstretched hand which you can mentally grasp and by which you can gradually lift yourself. Thus if the Overself is a vague abstraction to you, he or she, as a living person whom you have met, is not. That person can easily be for you a definite focus of concentration, a positive point in the infinite to which you can direct your inward glance.

* * *

When faced with problems which seem beyond adequate solution by reason or experience or counsel, take it as an indication that you are to put them to divine intervention. Ask during the time of prayer or meditation for the illuminating idea.

* * *

Whenever an emergency arises wherein you require help, guidance, protection, or inspiration, turn the thought away from self-power and bring it humbly to the feet of the higher power in prayer.

* * *

If you seek to invoke the divine grace to meet a genuine and desperate physical need or human result, seek first to find the sacred presence within yourself and only after you have found it, or at least only after you have attained the deepest point of contemplation possible to you, should you name the thing or result sought. For then you will not only be guided whether it be right to continue the request or not, but you will also put yourself in the most favourable position for securing grace.

■ ■ ■

What is needed to call down Grace is, first, a humility that is utter and complete, deeply earnest and absolutely sincere, secondly, an offering of self to the Overself, a dedication of earthly being to spiritual essence, and, thirdly, a daily practice of devotional exercise. The practices will eventually yield experiences, the aspirations will eventually bring assistance. The mysterious intrusion of Grace may change the course of events. It introduces new possibilities, a different current of destiny. . . .

■ ■ ■

If the technique of turning a problem or situation over to the higher power fails to yield favourable results, the fault lies in the person attempting to use it, not in the technique itself. If you are using it as an attempt to escape from coping with the problem or as a refusal to face up to the situation, and thus as an evasion of the lessons involved, it will be better for your own growth to meet with failure. And even among those who claim to have perceived the lessons, they may not have really done so but may have accepted only what suited their egos and rejected the rest. The full meaning of the experience must be taken deeply to heart and applied sincerely to living before the claim to have learned it can be substantiated.

■ ■ ■

If you have sought guidance through intuition or meditation but found only a barren result, you should watch whether circumstances themselves decide your course for you. If they do, it could well be that this is the outer response to your inner request.

■ ■ ■

If you have done everything that is in your power, the results are not in your hands and must consequently indicate destiny's will for you. They do not belong to your own will and must be accepted by you. Time will show their wisdom.

■ ■ ■

The reverence of confusion, when we kneel down to seek guidance out of it, is good; but the reverence of love, when we are attracted by the soul for its own sake, is better.

■ ■ ■

Why do we come to God's presence only with our messy problems and our dark troubles? Why only as beggars, or when unhappy, miserable, unhealthy? Can we not come to Him joyously, for His own sake, for love of Him alone?

■ ■ ■

Courage in the face of a risky situation, an uncertain future, a harassing present, comes easily and spontaneously to the person who surrenders self-will and submits to God's will.

* * *

The intuitive sensitivity of the artist and the discriminating intellect of a scientist are needed to keep that delicate balance which knows when to assume responsibility for one's own decision, action, and life and when to shift this responsibility to a higher power. The novice's statement that he commits his life into God's hands is not enough, for obviously if he continues to repeat the same foolish judgements and the same guilty conduct as before this commitment, his life still remains in the personal ego's hands. If his commitment is to be effective, it must be accompanied by the duty of self-improvement. Surrender to a higher power does not relieve him of this duty; on the contrary, it compels him more than ever before to its carrying out. The shifting of personal responsibility is achieved only when the awakening of consciousness to the higher self is itself achieved. The mere desire and consequent say-so of the aspirant does not and cannot become factual until then. He may seek to relieve himself of the pressure of obligation and the irritation of obstacles by this device, but the relief will be merely fictional and not factual.

* * *

This surrender of the future does not imply idleness and lethargy. It does imply the giving up of useless worry, the abandonment of needless anxiety.

* * *

Before you can even attempt to surrender the underself, you must first begin to feel, however feebly and however intermittently, that there is an Overself and that it is living there deep within your own heart. Such a feeling, however, must arise spontaneously and cannot be manufactured by any effort of your own. It does not depend on your personal choice whether you experience it or not. It is therefore an unpredictable factor; you cannot know when it is likely to come to you. This indeed is what makes this quest so mysterious. For such a feeling is nothing else than a manifestation of grace. . . .

* * *

The extraordinary thing is that when, putting aside the ego-desires, we selflessly seek to know the divine will for us in any given circumstances, the answer brings with it the strength necessary to obey it.

* * *

It is for you to do whatever practical wisdom calls for in each situation but, having done that, to relinquish the results to the higher power for better or for worse.

* * *

Selflessness does not mean the surrender of one's own ego to someone else's ego. Renouncing the personal will does not mean becoming the creature of another person's will. Humility does not mean becoming the helpless victim of other people's wrongdoing. The only surrender that we are entitled to make is surrender to the Higher Power.

■ ■ ■

Most people who state that they have submitted their financial affairs to a higher power find things going from bad to worse. This point must be clarified. There is not actual surrender, but only self-deception, if it is made before reason, will, and self-reliance have been exhausted. There is no such easy escape out of difficulties, financial or otherwise, as mere verbal assertion of surrender. Education comes by negotiating difficulties, not by running away from them in the name of surrender. True surrender can only be made when one is mature enough. Life is a struggle for all; only the wise struggle ego-lessly, but they struggle all the same. They have to because the adverse element in Nature is forever at war, tearing down where they build, stimulating strife where they give peace, and enslaving minds where they lead to freedom.

■ ■ ■

If you really surrender your life to the Higher Power and turn over your sense of responsibility to It, you will be unable to act selfishly in your relationship with others, but will consider their welfare along with your own.

* * *

You will have turned over the matter or problem if certain signs appear: first, no more anxiety or fretting about it; second, no more stress or tension over it; third, no more deliberating and thinking concerning it.

* * *

The Overself acts through inexorable law, yes, but love is part of the law. Grace violates no principle but rather fulfils the highest principle.

* * *

There is always some part of your person or fortune which remains wholly beyond your control. Do what you will you cannot alter it. It is then more prudent to acknowledge the inevitability of this condition than to waste strength in useless struggle. Sometimes you may then even turn it to your advantage. But how are you to know that this inevitability, this decree of fate, exists? By the fact that no matter how much you exert yourself to alter it, you fail.

* * *

The man who asserts his ego in everyday life is often the man who is more successful than his modest fellows. But it still remains open to question whether this kind of success is worth having.

* * *

This foolish attempt to climb higher and higher in the Tower of Babel which they have built arises out of false notions of success and failure. They measure success by the conditions surrounding a man and assess failure in the same way. There is a harsh lesson that life will ultimately teach them—that there is no equivalent compensation for the loss of spiritual values.

■ ■ ■

What most people count as great misfortunes sometimes open the door to new opportunities, ideas, or courses of action leading to advantages that would not otherwise have come. It is wiser to defer an appraisal of such events until they have shown their results as a whole to a final view.

■ ■ ■

It is not what the world calls success that philosophy endorses. You may suffer the ignominy of defeat and failure and yet fulfil the highest function, the true purpose of your life. It is an ignorant and mean definition of success which ties it to social recognition and worldly prosperity.

■ ■ ■

Failures directly contribute towards success, if you are wise enough to take their lessons so deeply to heart that your whole character undergoes a change in consequence.

The wise man knows that suffering has been essential to his development and has helped him to learn certain lessons. When others fall into the same experience, therefore, he does not wish that they should not have it so much as that they should learn the lesson of it. It would be illogical to apply his wisdom in his own case but to withhold it in the case of others. If a sentimentalist says that because he feels sympathy for others, he wishes them not to suffer, then that is all the more reason—not less—for wishing them not to suffer blindly.

* * *

When you accept affliction as having some message in it which you must learn, you will be able to bear it with dignity rather than with embitterment.

* * *

What you have brought upon yourself may come to an end of itself if you find out what positive quality you need to develop in your attitude toward it to replace the negative one.

* * *

Too many people are praying to be delivered from the consequences of their errors or weaknesses, too few are trying to set themselves free from the faults themselves. If the prayers of the larger group are answered, the weaknesses still remain and the same consequences are bound to recur again. If the efforts of the smaller group are successful, they will be delivered forever.

■ ■ ■

Too often man has to have his ego crushed, has to be pushed into sorrow or even despair, before he is willing to turn his head upward or to bend his knees in prayer to the unseen power.

■ ■ ■

It is when you break down and finally admit that you cannot go on, that both you and your life must change—it is at such a moment that you are close to the guidance and help of the Overself, if only you can recognize them and are willing to accept them.

■ ■ ■

The more you remember to think of asking what the divine intention is in these situations and hasten to co-operate with it, the sooner will they be rectified.

■ ■ ■

It is true that every happening in the outer life can be accepted as being good for the inner life, that the most calamitous situation can be taken as God's will for us. But it is also true that unless we ask—and correctly answer—in what sense it is good and why it is God's will, we may fail to seek out and strive to correct the fault in us which makes it good and providential. For each situation presents not only the need and opportunity of recognizing a higher power at work in our life, but also a problem in self-examination and self-improvement.

■ ■ ■

When you find that a condition is beyond your power to change, you may better endure it by holding the faith that all things and all conditions are ultimately ordered by the Universal Mind, and that they will work out for the best in the end.

■ ■ ■

The unity between our character and our destiny is inseparable; the connection between our way of thinking and the course of events is unerring.

■ ■ ■

From the first moment that we accept personal responsibility for our troubles, we can take the first step towards relieving them.

■ ■ ■

If you want to see a better world you must make your contribution toward it. And this demands inexorably that you begin with yourself and make your character and conduct better.

■ ■ ■

We have free will to change our character, but we must also call upon God's assistance. We are likely to fail without it and it is possible by striving too earnestly all alone to make ourselves mentally or physically ill. We should *pray* and ask for God's help even when trying to make ourselves have faith in a Higher Power as well as in ourselves.

■ ■ ■

If you regret your own conduct, be it a single action or a whole course of actions, you will feel some self-contempt and get depressed. This is a valuable moment, this turning of the ego against itself. If you take advantage of it to ferret out the cause in your own character . . . you may remold it in a more satisfactory way. This inner work is accomplished by a series of creative and positive meditations.

■ ■ ■

The lessons which life, guided by infinite intelligence and invested with infinite power as it is, seeks to make available to us through the turning wheel of destiny may bring suffering but they also bring the wisdom which will shield us from suffering in the future. This is possible only if we accept the suffering as self-earned, humbly study its lesson, and set to work on self-improvement. But if we are too proud, too weak, too foolish to receive the lesson, then the same suffering will reappear again and again in later years or later lives until we do. It will come as before through the same events, at the right time and in the right place. Whether it is life that punishes us through its eternal laws or we through our disobedience to them, we cannot dodge the step to be mounted.

■ ■ ■

Frankly confess your past mistakes, then analyse and absorb their unpalatable lessons, and resolve to apply the unpleasant result to your future actions. This is practical wisdom. It may be a saddening procedure, and if it is to be an effectual one, it ought to be. But having done it, be done with it. Turn your face toward the sun of hopefulness. Remember the strength, light, and joy waiting to be drawn from your higher self.

■ ■ ■

Meditation directed towards the reform and improvement of character should have a twofold approach. On the one hand, it should be analytic and logical self-criticism, exposing the faults and weaknesses, the unpleasant results to which they lead both for oneself and for others. On the other hand, it should be creative and imaginative picturing of the virtues and qualities which are the contrary opposites of the faults and shortcomings exposed by the other approach. The meditator should picture him or herself expressing these traits in action.

■ ■ ■

The man who is prone to impatience, irritability, and anger needs meditation even more than other men. He needs its harmonizing effect on the whole personality, its pacifying touch on the darker impulses and passions.

* * *

If the meditative act is used aright by the intellect, will, and imagination, it can become a means to an inspiration and an ecstasy beyond itself. It can be used as a stimulus to creative achievement in any field, including the spiritual and the artistic fields. It should be practised just before beginning to work. The technique is to hold on to the inspired attitude or the joyous feeling after meditation is completed and not to let it fade away. Then approach the work to be done and carry the attitude into it. It will be done with more power, more effectiveness, and especially more creativeness. Anyone who loves his task in this deeper way does it more easily and successfully than he who does not.

* * *

The philosophical use of meditation not only differs from its mystical use in some ways but also extends beyond it. A most important part of the student's meditations must be devoted to moral self-improvement. When you have made some progress in the art of meditation, you have acquired a powerful weapon to use in the war against your own baser attributes and personal weaknesses. You must reflect upon your own mistaken conduct of the past and the present, repent its occurrence, and resolve to rid yourself of the weaknesses which led you into it. You must contemplate the possibility of similar situations developing in the future and picture yourself acting in them as your better self would have you act. If, instead of using meditation periods only for lolling negatively in the emotional peace which they yield, you will reserve a part of those periods for positive endeavour to wield dominion over those attributes and weaknesses, you will find that the fortified will and intensified imagination of such moments become truly creative. For they will tend to reproduce themselves successfully in your subsequent external conduct. That which you have pictured to yourself and about yourself during meditation will suddenly come back to your consciousness during the post-meditative periods, or it will even express itself directly in external deeds when their meditative stimuli have been quite forgotten.

* * *

Pre-sleep exercise: If you are trying to cure yourself of a bad habit, think of a situation which gives rise to it and then of the physical and mental miseries which result from it. Then picture to yourself the development of such a situation and of your reaction to it in a positive reformed way. If this exercise is repeated night after night, you will one day find that when the situation occurs in real life, you will react rightly to it, resolutely turning your back on the bad habit. No special effort of will need be made; the change will be natural easy smooth and without strain. It will be as though some external force had intervened and resisted the bad habit on your behalf, achieving instantaneous triumph.

3

INSPIRATIONAL GEMS

The thing that really matters in the life of a nation is the quality of its leaders, the character of those who guide its destinies. Young people may not realize that enthusiasm alone is not enough, that character always does and always will count, that he who fits himself for greatness will see whole kingdoms delivered into his hands. Inspiration brings fortune in its train and inspired teachers will always rise.

Let us not betray the good that is in us by a cowardly submission to the bad that is in society.

* * *

What we were in the past is not important. What we are now is important. What we intend to make of ourselves in the future is vitally important.

* * *

Face yourself if you would find yourself. By this I do not only mean that you are to seek out and study the pathetic weaknesses of your lower nature, but also the noble inspirations of your higher nature.

* * *

The world's need today is not really for more new ideas, which means more thoughts, but for more wisdom, which means how to manage the thoughts which humanity has already accumulated through the centuries.

* * *

The unethical degradations which admittedly exist in business, political, and social worlds cannot be made to disappear by running away from them but rather by the uplifting influence of individuals with superior personal character entering into them.

* * *

The world will need men and women as leaders who have their roots deep down in the life of the divine self but who have their intellects very much alert, their hands very much alive, and their hearts very much expanded.

■ ■ ■

Let us have enough courage to face life yet let us not forget the need of enough humility to face our creator.

■ ■ ■

Because Mind has always and universally existed so has its associated aspect, Energy, or Life-Force. And because Mind connotes meaning and creates purpose, my life has a meaning and a purpose linked with the Universe's: it is neither empty nor alone. Hope, prayer, truth, and Presence are my birthright. I am entitled to them. But I must claim the right, make it my own through faith at first, and possibly through knowledge later.

■ ■ ■

If you begin the day with love in your heart, peace in your nerves, and truth in your mind, you not only benefit by their presence but also bring them to others—to your family or friends, and to all those whom destiny draws across your path that day.

■ ■ ■

A day begun with mental quiet and inner receptivity is a day whose work is well begun. Every idea, decision, move, or action which flows out from it later will be wiser better and nobler than it otherwise would have been.

■ ■ ■

Each person who brings more truth and goodness, more consciousness and balance into his or her own small circle, brings it into the whole world at the same time. A single individual may be helpless in the face of global events, but the echoes of the echoes of that person's inspired words and deeds, presence and thoughts, may be heard far from him in place and time.

■ ■ ■

You may be an insignificant creature in the vastness of the cosmos, but the divine life—of which that cosmos is but a channel—is in you, too. Have enough faith in your divine heritage, take it into your common everyday life and thought, and in some way, to some people, you will become very significant and important.

■ ■ ■

A humble life dedicated to a great purpose becomes great.

■ ■ ■

So far as past errors are concerned, forget them and start afresh, as if it were the first day in this body; but so far as your present contacts are concerned, be kind to them, as if it were your last day in this body.

■ ■ ■

It lies *in your mind* whether or not you shall make something worthwhile of your life. What you have learned from the past, what you think of the present, and what you seek from the future—all these *ideas* combine and influence the achieved result.

* * *

Although we are divided in awareness from the higher power, we are not divided in fact from it. The divine being is immanent in each one of us. This is why there is always some good in the worst of us.

* * *

The experiences of life, ennobling some people but degrading others, can in the end affect our thoughts, desires, and feelings only as we let them. It is for us to say whether they shall call forth our divinity or our brutality. Our attitude of mind helps to determine our experience of the world.

* * *

You triumph over conditions in the moment that you triumph over the thought of them.

* * *

If the past is unredeemable, and the future unpredictable, what more practical course is open than to safeguard the present by constant remembrance of the divine?

* * *

If a man asks why he can find no trace of God's presence in himself, I answer that he is full of evidence, not merely traces. God is present in him as consciousness, the state of being aware; as thought, the capacity to think; as activity, the power to move; and as stillness, the condition of ego, emotion, intellect, and body which finally and clearly reveals what these other things simply point to. "Be still, and know that I am God" is a statement of being whose truth can be tested by experiment and whose value can be demonstrated by experience.

* * *

Let us admit at once that in the hands of the unprepared and undisciplined and uninformed, the doctrine of "God in me" may prove dangerous to its follower. The danger is not in the doctrine itself, for it is a perfectly true one, but in him, in his conceit and lust. These may cause him to misapply the doctrine to suit the desires of his ego or the passions of his body. They may give him false license under the pretext that he is expressing unbridled the authentic freedom of the Spirit when, in fact, he is expressing the freedom of an animal. Thus truth can be misapplied distorted or caricatured by its supposed friends.

* * *

A true power will inform the hands of those who will act at the behest of the god within, whose daily admonishment is: "Go out and live for the welfare of humanity the Light you find in the deep recesses of your own heart."

* * *

The animal nature is naturally selfish, the spiritual nature unselfish. Between these two poles, man is brought more and more into conflict with himself as he evolves.

* * *

You need to hold the sacred conviction that so long as you continue to cherish the Ideal your higher self will not abandon you.

* * *

Remember that no enterprise or move should be left to depend on the ego's own limited resources. The humble invocation of help from the Higher Self expands those resources and has a protective value. At the beginning of every day, of every enterprise, of every journey, and of every important piece of work, remember the Overself and, remembering, be obedient to its laws. Seek its inspiration, its power. To make it your silent partner is to double your effectiveness.

* * *

Make it a matter of habit, until it becomes a matter of inclination, to be kind, gentle, forgiving, and compassionate. What can you lose? A few things now and then, a little money here and there, an occasional hour or an argument? But see what you can gain! More release from the personal ego, more right to the Overself's grace, more loveliness in the world inside us, and more friends in the world outside us.

* * *

One consequence of this compassionate habit is that an immense comprehension of human nature floods your whole being.

* * *

It is not that truth has to be made practical, for it is the most practical thing which exists. It is that men and women have to become better instructed in it, as well as in the higher laws which reflect it, and then live out what they have learned.

* * *

Wisdom begins only when you apply in practice what you absorb in theory.

* * *

Blessed are those who can find or keep this faith that, in spite of all unpleasant contradictory appearances, the course of human life will in the end be upward and the goal of human life will be spiritual self-fulfilment.

* * *

To be humble is to be willing to admit the galling fact that one's own shortcomings of character or intelligence (and not other people's) were mostly responsible for most of one's troubles.

* * *

Self-purification is the best prayer, self-correction is the most effectual one.

* * *

Let us consider truth as an ever-receding horizon. Thus we achieve humility and keep the mind open for progress through these successive degrees.

* * *

Deep down within the heart there is a stillness which is healing, a trust in the universal laws which is unwavering, and a strength which is rock-like. But because it is so deep we need both patience and perseverance when digging for it.

* * *

He or she is a complete person who takes in the artist's contribution to beauty, the scientist's contribution to facts, the metaphysician's contribution to truth, the religionist's contribution to faith, and the humanist's contribution to goodness.

* * *

Humility: See all men and women according to the Holy Ghost that is within them; always remember that the outer picture is still being worked on.

* * *

That which sustains each individual mind is a universal one. Therefore, that which is best for you in social and ethical action must also fulfil the requirement of being what is best for all. Otherwise it is incomplete.

* * *

You have to bring your scheming mind, your rational mind, your concrete mind to bear upon solutions to your practical problems; but you must work them out under the inspiration of the soul, else they are solutions that solve little.

* * *

To bring the divine presence into the midst of one's work and one's work continually into the divine presence—this is an inspired and worthwhile active life.

* * *

Ancient spirituality thought that what was most important was to cultivate individual soul. Modern materialism thinks it should be social betterment. These two goals have usually been placed in opposition. But modern spirituality refuses to accept such a false dilemma. Let us seek *both* the cultivation of the soul, it declares, and the betterment of social conditions. Why, when we open our eyes to the one need, should we shut them to the other? Humanity's outer need does not justify the neglect of our own inner need, nor this the neglect of the other. No amount of humanitarianism can counterbalance the duty of devoting time and energy to spiritualizing our own self also, but this ought not become so self-centered as to become a total and exclusive devotion.

* * *

The need today is for harmonious balance between the inner and the outer being, between divine spirit and earthly body, so that the one faithfully reflects the other.

* * *

The orientation of modern spirituality, under the changed conditions of today, is not towards retreat from the world but towards a spiritualizing effort in the world.

* * *

Hope is the scaffolding of life. But unless the hands go out in action we may stand upon it forever yet the building will never be erected. That is why we who seek for Truth must work interiorly and work intensely amid the common mortar and bricks of mundane existence. Our dreams of a diviner life are prophetic, but we turn them to realities only when we turn our hands to the tasks and disciplines presented by the world.

* * *

When the better souls non-cooperatively stay out of worldly business because they dislike it, or regard it as soiled, or are too weak for it, they leave the field open to the worse ones.

■ ■ ■

When those who occupy high position, who rule, lead, advise, instruct, and inform, are unfit for their position and lack the needed qualities, attributes, and consciousness, then society falls into disorder; its levels get mixed up so that words, names, designations, and terms become empty, distorted, or misleading. And as a result of the disorders which break out, violence, hatred, and even wars—civil or international—afflict the world.

■ ■ ■

Responsibilities tend to gravitate to the shoulders of those who can bear them best.

■ ■ ■

Those who are "out of centre," eccentric and different from others because they are unbalanced mentally and uncontrolled emotionally, will not heed what conventional society demands from them. But there exists a second group of persons who are likewise "different" and heedless of conventions, although often in other ways. This group is what it is by reason of its being a pioneer one which has advanced farther along the road of evolution than the herd behind. From it are drawn the great reformers and their followers, those who stand firmly by moral principle and factual truth. It is they who try to lift up society and put right its abuses and cruelties, its wrongs and superstitions. They are daring champions who do not stop to count the cost of their service but, enduring ridicule, persecution, or even crucifixion, go ahead unfalteringly where others draw back.

■ ■ ■

A good deal of achievement goes on in the silent solitude of our own hearts, unnoticed and unknown to others; one day it blossoms into irresistible action, and then the world wonders why.

■ ■ ■

It is easy and common to blame others who cross our path or belong to our surroundings as being the provocative cause of our irritability or resentment. But if we forgive them instead and hold them in the thought of goodwill, not only will our relationship with them improve but we ourselves will profit exceedingly.

■ ■ ■

No man need take himself so seriously that he thinks the world's happiness or understanding depends on him. The world found these things before he was born and can find them again.

■ ■ ■

The earth will continue to turn on its axis, with or without you. You are not so important as you think.

■ ■ ■

In every human difficulty there are two ways open to us. The common way is familiar enough: it consists in reacting egoistically and emotionally with self-centered complaint, irritability, fear, anger, despair, and so on. The uncommon way is taken by a spiritually minded few: it consists in making something good out of something bad, in reacting selflessly, calmly, constructively, and hopefully. This is the way of practical philosophy, this attempt to transform what outwardly seems so harmful into what inwardly at least must be markedly beneficent. It is a magical work. But it can only be done by deep thought, self-denial, and love. If the difficulty is regarded as both a chance to show what we can do to develop latent resources as well as a test of what we have already developed, it can be made to help us. Even if we do not succeed in changing an unfavourable environment for the better, such an approach would to some extent change ourselves for the better. We must accept, with all its tremendous implications for our past, present, and future, that we are ultimately responsible for the conditions which stamp our life. Such acceptance may help to shatter our egoism and that, even though it is painful, will be all to the good. Out of its challenge can come the most blessed change in ourselves.

■ ■ ■

The man or woman whose thinking is unbiased by prejudice and whose feeling is untainted by selfishness is invested with a moral authority which others lack.

■ ■ ■

By forgiving those who have harmed us, we put ourselves in the position of earning forgiveness for the harm we ourselves have done.

■ ■ ■

If you live *inwardly* in love and harmony with yourself and with all others, if you persistently reject all contrary ideas and negative appearances, then this love and this harmony must manifest themselves *outwardly* in your environment.

■ ■ ■

There is only room in your mind for a single thought at a time. Take care, then, that it be a positive one.

■ ■ ■

It is true that people learn through disappointment and develop through suffering. But this need not cause us to forget that they also learn and develop through joy and beauty.

■ ■ ■

Life is still the greatest of games you can play. But you must play to win in every minute of it, with every move on the board. Every time despair comes and whispers to you, you should put cotton-wool in your ears. We were born to master—not to be mastered. Faith can fight despair, and win, too. Look upon your difficulties not as stumbling blocks to trip you up, but as things waiting to be conquered.

■ ■ ■

What lies at the root of all these errors in conduct and defects in character? It is the failure to understand that you are more than your body. It is, in one word, materialism.

■ ■ ■

Teach elementary manners, that is, a warm smile.

■ ■ ■

When you are able to bring yourself to practise this bestowal of silent blessing upon all others, and to practise it both lovingly and universally, you will find it a quick cure for the trouble of nervous self-consciousness. Instead of feeling uneasy in the presence of certain persons or of a crowd, you will feel poised. Why is this so? Because you are drawing Grace down to yourself. This secret was seen by Oscar Wilde when he said: "One cannot search for love. It comes to us unbidden, when we give love to others."

■ ■ ■

If we will bring more sincerity and more integrity into our lives, more truth and more wisdom into our minds, more goodwill and more self-discipline into our hearts, not only will we be more blessed but also all others with whom we are in touch.

■ ■ ■

The idea that being practical means being dead to all sacred feelings and holy intuitions is another error to be exposed. Everywhere men and women of affairs and achievement, both celebrated and obscure, have kept their inward being sensitive and alive amidst their earthly labours and worldly successes.

■ ■ ■

Those who have been given a mission to perform, however small or large it may be, too often fall into the arrogant error of extending it beyond the proper limits. They let the ego intrude, overplay their hand, and thus spoil what might otherwise have been a good result.

■ ■ ■

Unless humanity recognizes that demonic powers are loose in its midst, are inspiring hatred violence suspicion and greed, it will not go down on its knees to ask help from a power greater than and beyond itself.

■ ■ ■

The need for finer manners where coarse vulgarity, aggressive obscenity, and raucous noisiness prevail, speaks for itself to those who seek escape from materialism. In an atmosphere of disorderly or non-existent manners, materialistic thought flourishes all the more.

■ ■ ■

Racial animosity is really a pathological state which clouds vision and falsifies judgement. It raises prejudice to the dignity of a principle. Hate is a mental poison. It is the worst possible sin of our thought life. It damages those we hate, infects our own environment, and in the end it severely damages ourselves. The ability to treat all kinds and classes of people equally, and with universal goodwill, does not imply the inability to observe the comparative differences and even defects among them.

* * *

The pursuit of nonviolence in the international field is like the pursuit of politico-economic utopia—a dream. It is laudably idealistic but, unfortunately, it is also ill-founded. The pacifism which preaches a total and absolute nonviolence, applicable all the time and in all situations, fails to recognize what is written all over the universe—the law of opposites. It is their balance which holds all things in the world, all creatures in Nature, together. In human life their conflict breeds violence, and their recession, peace. War can change its form, can lose its brutality, can be lifted to a higher level altogether where words displace weapons, and this will certainly happen. But war at worst, friction at best, will not disappear so long as the ego in man with its negative emotions is his ruler.

* * *

The human journey from mere animal existence to real spiritual essence is reflected in human ethics, where rules imposed from without are gradually supplanted by principles intuited from within.

■ ■ ■

To the extent that anything lifts people up out of their animality, it serves a higher purpose. This is true of athletic training and religious aspiration, of social codes and personal self-respect. For in the end they must turn their minds away from the passions which they share with the sub-human kingdom to the fulfilment of their higher human possibilities and destiny.

■ ■ ■

The amoral is always the first step to the immoral.

■ ■ ■

When you begin to excuse in your own mind an evil course for the sake of an excellent objective, you begin unconsciously to change your objective.

■ ■ ■

Do not attempt to fight evil with evil. Overcome it by calling on a higher power to bring out the good in you wherewith to meet it. In this way you obey Jesus' counsel, "Resist not evil."

■ ■ ■

To free yourself from the bondage of time, you must free yourself from the claims, the demands, the relationships, and the grievances of the past. You need do this only inwardly and mentally, of course. You are to come to the beginning of each single day as a new beginning, not letting the familiar, the routine, the habitual, the environmental, impose its old ties upon your thought, your faith, or your imagination.

* * *

When we begin to understand the true nature of time we perforce revise our attitude towards it. We learn never to be in a hurry, to work without haste, and to build slowly but surely like corals.

* * *

Whoever labours worthily at a worthy task which does not afflict his conscience is rendering service to humanity. It does not matter whether he is a peasant or a businessman, a bricklayer's apprentice or a spiritual teacher.

* * *

That alone is true culture which refines taste, improves character, lifts standards, corrects behaviour, and teaches self-control.

* * *

Family life is an indispensable social safeguard, the most valuable medium for promoting right moral attitudes amongst those who are passing through the stages of childhood and adolescence. A true individualization of the human entity will not destroy but rather conserve all that is best in the family spirit.

* * *

When the family circle prepares the younger members for mature life, it does its duty. But when it sets itself up as the supreme value of human existence and its loyalties or attachments as the supreme forms of human ethics, it overdoes duty and breeds evils. It stifles individual growth and crushes independent thought. It is nothing more than enlarged self-centeredness. It turns a means into an end. Thus the influence of a useful institution, if over-emphasized, becomes unhealthy and vicious. Parents who refuse to release their children, even when the latter are fully adult, who constantly fuss around them with over-solicitousness and hover around with over-protectiveness, belong to the patriarchal age. They stifle the children's development, breed the daughter-in-law's or the son-in-law's resentment, and fill their own minds with unnecessary anxieties.

■ ■ ■

It is useful to get misguided people to practise meditation, for it calms passion and lulls the ego. Nevertheless it cannot cure them. They are the products of mis-education and so the radical or fundamental cure is right education—that is, right thinking.

■ ■ ■

Right thinking is not only an intellectual quality; it is almost a moral virtue.

■ ■ ■

What is right at an early stage of development may not be right at a later one. The fitness of an ethos depends also on its time and place. It is better to define the concrete task of the moment rather than revel in abstract phrases about the distant future.

■ ■ ■

We are incarnated to be educated. Experience provides the lessons, and necessity gives the disciplines.

■ ■ ■

The world will change, and change for the better, when we put our schools in order, when we educate our children less in geography and more in unselfishness, less in history and more in high character, less in a dozen other subjects and more in the art of right living.

■ ■ ■

True education will nurture noble character rather than egoistic calculation, foster sharp intelligence rather than routine memory, train the student to the kind of technical work he or she likes to do and can do, and teach things of lasting value rather than force useless ones into the mind.

■ ■ ■

A stirred and awakened section of the people, mostly young, protest against the pollutions of air, earth, water, and food we suffer from. What of the degradations of character too?

■ ■ ■

The young need to be taught the significance of courtesy, the importance of good manners, the value of refinement, long before they are taught the name of Chile's capital city.

■ ■ ■

Of what use is an education if it does not teach the young how to use their minds so as to promote their own welfare, instead of their own harm? All ought to be made aware of the value and need of emotional and thought control, of discriminating between destructive or negative thoughts and constructive or positive ones.

■ ■ ■

It is not enough for parents to protect a child—they should also encourage and stimulate it to awaken spiritually.

■ ■ ■

An upbringing which supplies children with no truth, light, virtue, or faith in the higher power behind the universe, which passes on to them no spiritual help or strength, is reproachable.

■ ■ ■

So long as the young are falsely taught to identify the historic greatness of a nation with the successful aggressions of that nation, so long will violence, crime, and selfishness spoil their characters.

■ ■ ■

It is proper for the young to be ambitious, to develop their potential capacities and improve their personalities. But they should not be left with the idea that this is all that life requires from them.

■ ■ ■

The idea of authority is hotly contested by the young, who fail to see that it is just as necessary as the idea of non-authority or freedom. This is true whether it is imposed on us by the higher laws governing existence or by other persons who are qualified to do so or even imposed by ourselves in the form of ideals and standards.

■ ■ ■

There is a healthy, wise, and necessary conservatism and a stuffy, stupid, and obsolete conservatism. The distinction between them must be kept clear.

■ ■ ■

Those of the young who fiercely reject all restrictions which hamper their freedom because they want to be themselves, to keep their individuality, are right in a blind unseeing uninformed way. They are free to be their *best* selves. Until they recognize this truth they need control, from within and from without.

■ ■ ■

The young do not know, but some among them want to know. They want to know why they are here and what is the purpose of their lives, how they are to conduct themselves, and whether or not there is a deity. But for all this they need guidance and they need instruction. They come more quickly with faith to a teaching than their elders do, and that which could be their uplift could also be their downfall. For they are more easily misled than their elders. Those who know and can ought to do something to assist them.

■ ■ ■

The next century will not support an educational system which encourages cruel competitive egoism in place of co-operation among pupils, which freely punishes them because it rarely understands them, which sets up examinations as a criterion of culture when they are merely criteria of cramming, which tyrannically attempts to mold all minds alike to the same degree within the same time instead of making allowances for ability, individuality, sensitivity, tendency, and difference of innate capacity to progress, which overdoes its tougher disciplines and underdoes its gentler ethics, which worships the dead past and remains superciliously irrelevant to the contemporary scene, which vainly loads memory instead of stimulating and satisfying curiosity, and which has no place for a few minutes of mental quiet in its daily progress.

* * *

Who can measure the great tide of unnecessary misery which the examination system has brought into being amongst children? The child who has made a poor show feels that he has brought down upon himself the displeasure of his parents, the ridicule of his schoolmates, and the dissatisfaction of his teachers. Nor is this all. Failure to pass this torturous ordeal creates inferiority complexes, anxiety neuroses, emotional warpings, and torturing fears which may mar the child's entire adjustment to his life afterwards. Moreover, the competitive character of his experience tends to arouse jealousy and even hatred for the more successful children.

We have made a veritable fetish of competitive examinations. Students are not really taught; they are not allowed to study in the true sense but are forced to cram books and notes. The examination system inevitably forces them to become mental automatons, whereas a less mechanical system would encourage them really to learn. Pupils who cram their heads with "stuff" and merely repeat it in examinations do not necessarily develop their minds. The ultimate goal of education ought to be not learned pedantry, not the gaining of a diploma or degree, but the understanding and mastery of life. The mere stuffing of information should be quite subordinate to this goal.

The coming education will be based on new and higher principles, its efficacy tested less by the miserable system of competitive academic examinations which grade powers of parrot-like remembrance than by powers of enlightened intelligence. The general outlook of whole nations will be healthfully altered.

* * *

Why should the universities teach only the humanities and the sciences, but fail to teach a single student how to become a full human being? Why do they not impart the only science which deals with THAT WHICH IS? How many have told me that during the few minutes of a short [spiritual] Glimpse they feel that more worthwhile knowledge came to them than they gained in all their years of formal education in school and college!

* * *

An education which does not end in some spiritual understanding and some moral elevation is incomplete and imperfect. But this cannot be accomplished within the customary school and college periods. The higher education of the human being can begin only after his mind has matured and only after he has had some social experience—that is, in adult life. This is why it is equally important that grown men and women should go on learning, should never cease to be students, and should turn the experiences of life into lessons.

* * *

The young must be taught to govern themselves, and how this is best done. They must be instructed in the higher laws and especially the law of consequences, so that they may avoid punishing themselves. They must learn the power of thought, the harm of anger, the benefit of surrendering the ego. They must regain the old-fashioned virtues of good manners, tolerance, and respect for the older generation.

* * *

Education will recognize that the study of philosophy should occupy the last and highest place in a complete course. But it is precisely this study which our present education sees no use for. The young need philosophy no less than the old, for on the threshold of starting life, with its varied possibilities and hard problems, they feel how useful some guidance can be. The time to save a man is not in his old age, after he has lived, but in his young age, before he has lived. It is then that he is most susceptible to moral guidance, most suggestible by nonmaterialistic teaching, and most imitative of good conduct. Later is often too late. The idea and practice of spiritual development ought to be introduced into the schools and colleges. How to do this and not be blocked by obstacles offered by sectarian religion is the biggest problem.

* * *

No system of education can be a complete or an adequate one if it omits to teach young persons how to meditate. This is the one art which can assist them not only to develop self-control and to improve character but also to master all the other arts through mastery of concentration. When their minds have been trained to concentrate attention well, all their intellectual capacities and working powers attain the most individual expression with the least effort.

* * *

To bring a well-informed and well-educated mind to bear upon all questions, to keep feeling in proper balance with reasoning, to deny the ego its insatiable demand for rulership—this gives you poise, frees you from lamentable prejudice, and imparts perspective to your conclusions.

* * *

What chance has the individual spiritual educator to continue his or her work when public and government alike accept the false suggestion that only through large organized groups and recognized traditional institutions can people be correctly led? The end of such a trend can only be as it has been in the past—monopoly, dictatorial religion, centralized tyrannical power, heresy-hunting persecution, and the death of individualism, which means the death of truth. Jesus, Buddha, Spinoza were all individualists.

* * *

The great teacher leaves his impress and exerts his influence upon his disciples without robbing them of their capacity to grow into their own individual freedom.

▪ ▪ ▪

It is not by making a person—be he disciple or learner—subservient and dependent that we serve him best, but by helping him to help himself, to develop himself.

▪ ▪ ▪

Those who have not taken the precaution to study other teachings, other ideas, other experiences, and other revelations, but only the views of their own favoured teacher, may have learned the worst and not the best. And those who know only their own religion, their own nation's history and form of government may pay in some way or other for their ignorance. Comparative study will be part of the education of a better world. It will not only bring less prejudice and more tolerance, but also—what is more important—help to establish truth.

▪ ▪ ▪

Too many of those who rebel against the old forms, whether of society, art, thought, or politics, demand new forms vociferously—but why should the new be worthier than the old? It may be, but it is not to be welcomed merely because it is new. It is to be welcomed when it gives a chance to be better than the old.

* * *

It is absurd for the young rebels to try to sever themselves completely from the past. It simply cannot be done. The attitude which they should adopt is to take what is worthwhile from the past and discard the rest. But the influence of the past is present, whether they want it or not. Change is governing every phase of life, every period of a single lifetime, and every phase of this planet's history. Unless this is recognized and reckoned with in our practical dealings, we are bound to suffer because of our attachments to objects, things, persons, and ideas.

* * *

Only those people are entitled to freedom who understand and accept the responsibilities involved in it. And even such people are entitled only to so much of it as accords with the extent to which they possess this understanding and yield this acceptance. Outer discipline may go only if, and only so far as, inner discipline replaces it.

* * *

If you demand freedom you must accept the responsibility which accompanies it. This is not only a human and social law but also a divine and karmic law.

* * *

So long as those who lead nations or rule peoples have wholly or partially inadequate understanding of the profounder significance of human existence, so long will those nations and peoples be led from one painful blunder to another.

* * *

However virtuous our intentions, we not infrequently work harm to others. This shows that it is not enough to be good. Wisdom must direct our goodness, must bestow on us the capacity to foresee what is likely to ensue from our actions.

* * *

Only to the extent that you unite your own little purpose with the universal purpose can you find harmony and happiness. Its strength will support you firmly in adversity and misfortune, as it will carry you triumphantly through misery and hostility.

* * *

Only those who know some of the secret laws of the universe know that this is not a teaching for mere dreamers and irresponsible escapists. They know that the ultimate peace, safety, and health of a people depend on the extent to which the principles of living under these laws are understood.

* * *

You are part of the World-Mind's [God's] World-Idea. Therefore, you are a part of its purpose too. Seek to be shown what that is, and how you may realize it, rather than mope in misery, frustration, or fear. Look upon your situation—personal, domestic, career, mental, emotional, spiritual—as having significance within that purpose, as teaching you some specific lesson or telling you what to do or not to do.

■ ■ ■

The more one learns about the World-Idea, the more one wonders at it. To go farther and co-operate with it is to find peace.

■ ■ ■

We can be co-workers with the World-Mind only to the extent that we withdraw from our ego. Then only are we able to receive correctly the wonderful revelation of the world's meaning and laws, so that we can participate intelligently and lovingly.

■ ■ ■

If Nature keeps her lips inexorably shut to the questions of those who abuse her, she graciously opens them in perfect response to those who ask with a quieted, co-operative and harmonious ego.

■ ■ ■

If there is any law which governs human existence it is the law of change. We forget it at our peril. Most ancient societies forgot it and suffered.

■ ■ ■

If present-day world misery demonstrates anything at all, it demonstrates the failure of the materialistic outlook, the futility of expecting peace and prosperity from purely material sources, the danger of ignoring the stubborn fact that personal character counts most in the making of a people's happiness. The old way of sheer materialism has been tried and found to end in a dangerous morass. The new way of a nobler life and deeper faith does not look so tempting. Yet other way there is not except to sink in a still deeper morass.

* * *

The pathway of greedy acquisition upon which humanity now stands must be left for wise cooperation. The old motives will not work today.

* * *

The economic and political reconstruction of the world is a vitally important task, but its ethical reconstruction is immeasurably more important. The former touches the surface of life only, the latter touches its very core.

* * *

Unless there be a change of moral ground, a shift of ethical standpoint, a new spiritual approach, the hopes aroused by political changes, shifts, and innovations will be false ones.

* * *

Not any military, political, or economic preparation—whether defensive or aggressive—has any hope for mankind's true protection, if it does not include learning and obeying these higher laws. There are healing, restorative, guiding, and protective forces amid us even today, trying to reach the human race and to penetrate the dense, dark conditions surrounding it. If they are recognized and received in time, it will be saved from a frightfully destructive event. But if human blindness and inertia prevent this from happening, the penalty will have to be paid.

■ ■ ■

The wider our experience of this world, the more must be our realization of the truth that it is the spiritual outlook and moral attitude which really determine a society's socio-political form and active course.

■ ■ ■

Those who are led by religious enthusiasts to expect a miraculous conversion of mankind to goodwill peace and wisdom overnight, expect the impossible and are preparing themselves for bitter disappointment. Human character grows gradually; it does not improve by magical transformation. It is better to be realistic, to face the unpalatable truth, than to surrender ourselves to wishful thinking and be deceived thereby. For emotion and passion are still the real rulers of mankind, say what you will.

■ ■ ■

We have to accept the solid fact that men and women do not change overnight, that starting new institutions and necessarily filling them with the same old faces that we already know, will not and cannot bring about a new world. Until we begin to recognize this and start working for new hearts and new minds even more than for institutions, we shall not come near to solving our problems.

■ ■ ■

The real war today is within the human mind. The real choice is between allegiances being made there. As individuals give themselves up to, or cleanse themselves from, the base emotions, they carry on *this* inner war.

■ ■ ■

If your fidelity to worthy ideals remains through situations which test character and you react honourably to events which expose it, you find that in the end your real welfare in the world also remains. Whether you are encircled by business affairs or pressed by everyday work or worthily consume time in other ways, your lasting good will not suffer. Only the less important surface life may do so. Even there you may be saved from entering wrong courses.

■ ■ ■

So long as human beings do not know and feel their real being within the greater being of God, so long will friction and hostility prevail among them.

* * *

It requires a strong faith to believe that even in the midst of the direst distress, of the gloomiest hardship, what happens is sanctioned by, and under the rule of, divinely ordained laws and that it has a rational and higher meaning which we should seek to extract and heed. Those who lack this faith bear strain-ridden faces that betray no inner calm. Yet it is only a single step to turn around and start the journey from inner wretchedness to inner radiance.

* * *

Only as people become convinced that their further fortune and happiness or distress and trouble are closely connected with their obedience to these higher laws—and particularly the law of karma—will they discover that not only is virtue its own reward but also adds to peace of mind.

* * *

Optimism becomes as unreasonable as pessimism when both ignore the two-faced character of fortune and Nature, the Yin-Yang interplay.

* * *

A view of the World which fails or refuses to recognize that the opposites are essential to it, which accepts its beauty but not its ugliness, is not complete and only half true.

* * *

A Prayer For The World:

In this time of confusion and anxiety, of strife and trouble, it is our holy duty to remember our dependence on Thee, O real Governor of the world!

We realize that the darkness in the world today has come because so many have forgotten their dependence on Thee.

Those whose positions of power or influence have placed them in the nations' councils need, in their grave responsibility, the help of Thy communion and the benefit of Thy guidance as never before, that they may not stray into error or weakness.

Therefore, we shall daily pray for them and for ourselves, in minutes of private worship or silent meditation, that all may regain the feeling of Thy presence. We shall constantly confess our shortcomings and faults, but we promise to strive to better and ennoble our lives. We shall endeavour to cast out all evil thinking and materialistic belief.

Our need of Thy mercy and grace is vast. Show us the way to win them, O Infinite Father of all beings, Whose love is our last resource.

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